in the battle between the gods and the Asuras in days of yore. The great rishi Markandeya narrated it to my sire. I will now recite it without leaving out anything, O best of royal sages. Listen to that account confidingly and without mistrusting it at all. Between the gods and the Asuras, each desirous of vanquishing the other, there happened a great battle, O king, which had Taraka for its evil (root). It hath been heard by us that the Daityas were defeated by the gods. Upon the defeat of the Daityas, the three sons of Taraka, named Tarakaksha, Kamalaksha and Vidyunmalin, O king, practising the austerest penances, lived in the observance of high vows. By those penances they emaciated their bodies, O scorcher of foes. In consequence of their self-restraint, their penances, their vows and contemplation, the boongiving Grandsire became gratified with them and gave them boons. Unitedly they solicited the Grandsire of all the worlds, O king, for the boon of immunity from death at the hands of all Creatures of all times. The divine Lord and Master of all the worlds said unto them, 'There is nothing like immunity from death at the hands of all creatures. Therefore, ye Asuras, abstain from such a prayer. Solicit some other boon that may seem desirable to you.' When all of them, O king, having settled it amongst themselves after long and repeated conferences, bowed to the great Master of all the worlds and said these words, 'O god, O Grandsire, give us this boon. Residing in three cities, we will rove over this Earth, with thy grace ever before us. After a 1,000 years then, we will come together, and our three cities also, O sinless one, will become united into one. That foremost one amongst the gods who will, with one shaft, pierce those three cities united into one, will, O lord, be the cause of our destruction.' Saying unto them, 'Let it be so,' that god ascended to heaven. Those Asuras then, filled with joy at having obtained those boons and having settled it among themselves about the construction of the three cities, selected for the purpose the great Asura Maya, the celestial artificer, knowing no fatigue or decay, and worshipped by all the daityas and danavas. Then Maya, of great intelligence, by the aid of his own ascetic merit, constructed three cities, one of which was of gold, another of silver, and the third of black iron. The golden city was set in heaven, the silver city in the welkin, and the iron city was set on the Earth, all in such a way as to revolve in a circle, O lord of Earth. Each of those cities measured a hundred yojanas in breadth and a hundred in length. And they consisted of houses and mansions and lofty walls and porches. And though teeming with lordly palaces close to each other, yet the streets were wide and spacious. And they were adorned with diverse mansions and gate-ways. Each of those cities, again, O monarch, had a separate king. The beautiful city of gold belonged to the illustrious Tarakaksha: the silver city to Kamalaksha, and the iron one to Vidyunmalin. Those three Daitya kings, soon assailing the three worlds with their energy, continued to dwell and reign, and began to say, 'Who is he called the Creator?' Unto those foremost of Danavas having no heroes equal to them, came from every side millions upon millions, of proud and flesh-eating Danavas who had before been defeated by the celestials, and who now settled in the three cities, desirous of great prosperity. Unto all of them thus united, Maya became the supplier of every thing they wanted. Relying upon him, all of them resided there, in

perfect fearlessness. Whoever amongst those residing in the triple city wished for any object in his heart had his wish fulfilled by Maya aided by the latter's powers of illusion. Tarakaksha had a heroic and mighty son named Hari. He underwent the austerest of penances, upon which the Grandsire became gratified with him. When the god was gratified, Hari solicited a boon of him, saying, 'Let a lake start into existence in our city, such that persons, slain by means of weapons, may, when thrown into it, come out with life, and with redoubled strength.' Obtaining this boon, the heroic Hari, son of Tarakaksha, created a lake, O lord, in his city, that was capable of reviving the dead. In whatever form and whatever guise a Daitya might have been slain, if thrown into that lake, he was restored to life, in the self-same form and guise. Obtaining alive the slain among them, the Daityas began to afflict the three worlds. Crowned with success by means of austere penances, those enhancers of the fears of the gods sustained, O king, no diminution in battle. Stupefied then by covetousness and folly, and deprived of their senses, all of them began to shamelessly exterminate the cities and towns established all over the universe. Filled with pride at the boons they had received, and driving before them, at all times and from all places, the gods with their attendants, they roamed at will over celestial forests and other realms dear to the denizens of heaven and the delightful and sacred asylums of rishis. And the wicked Danavas ceased to show any respect for anybody. While the worlds were thus afflicted, Sakra, surrounded by the Maruts, battled against the three cities by hurling his thunder upon them from every side. When, however, Purandra failed to pierce those cities made impenetrable, O king, by the Creator with his boons, the chief of celestials, filled with fear, and leaving those cities, repaired with those very gods to that chastiser of foes, viz., the Grandsire, for representing unto him the oppressions committed by the Asuras. Representing everything and bowing with their heads unto him, they asked the divine Grandsire the means by which the triple city could be destroyed. The illustrious Deity, hearing the words of Indra, told the gods, 'He that is an offender against you offends against me also. The Asuras are all of wicked souls and always hate the gods. They that give pain to you always offend against me. I am impartial to all creatures. There is no doubt in this. For all that, however, they that are unrighteous should be slain. This is my fixed vow. Those three forts are to be pierced with one shaft. By no other means can their destruction be effected. None else, save Sthanu, is competent to pierce them with one shaft. Ye Adityas, select Sthanu, otherwise called Ishana and Jishnu, who is never fatigued with work, as your warrior. It is he that will destroy those asuras.' Hearing these words of his, the gods with Sakra at their head, making Brahman take their lead, sought the protection of the Deity having the bull for his mark. Those righteous ones accompanied by rishis devoted to the severest penances and uttering the eternal words of the Vedas, sought Bhava with their whole soul. And they praised, O king, in the high words of the Vedas, that dispeller of fears in all situations of fear that Universal Soul, that Supreme Soul, that One by whom All this is pervaded with his Soul. Then the gods who, by special penances, had learnt to still all the functions of his Soul and to withdraw Soul from Matter,--they who had their soul always under control--beheld

him, called Ishana,--that lord of Uma, that mass of energy, that is, who hath no equal in the universe, that source (of everything), that sinless Self. Though that Deity is one they had imagined him to be of various forms. Beholding in that high-souled one those diverse forms that each had individually conceived in own heart, all of them became filled with wonder. Beholding that Unborn one, that Lord of the universe, to be the embodiment of all creatures, the gods and the regenerate Rishis, all touched the Earth with their heads. Saluting them with the word 'Welcome' and raising them from their bent attitudes, the illustrious Sankara addressed them smilingly, saying, 'Tell us the object of your visit.' Commanded by the Three-eyed god, their hearts became easy. They then said these words unto him, 'Our repeated salutations to thee, O Lord. Salutations to thee that art the source of all the gods, to thee that art armed with the bow, to thee that art full of wrath. Salutations to thee that hadst destroyed the sacrifice of that lord of creatures (viz., Daksha) to thee that art adored by all the lords of creatures. Salutations to thee that art always praised, to thee that deservest to be praised, to thee that art Death's self. Salutations to thee that art red, to thee that art fierce, to thee that art blue-throated, to thee that art armed with the trident, to thee that art incapable of being baffled, to thee that hast eyes as beautiful as those of the gazelle, to thee that fightest with the foremost of weapons, to thee that deservest all praise, to thee that art pure, to thee that art destruction's self, to thee that art the destroyer; to thee that art irresistible, to thee that art Brahman, to thee that leadest the life of a brahmacari; to thee that art Ishana; to thee that art immeasurable, to thee that art the great controller, to thee that art robed in tatters; to thee that art ever engaged in penances, to thee that art tawny, to thee that art observant of vows, to thee that art robed in animal skins; to thee that art the sire of Kumara, to thee that art three-eyed, to thee that art armed with the foremost of weapons, to thee that destroyest the afflictions of all that seek thy shelter, to thee that destroyest all haters of brahmanas, to thee that art the lord of all trees, the lord of all men, the lord of all kine, and ever the lord of sacrifices. Salutations to thee that art always at the head of troops, to thee that art three-eyed, to thee that art endued with fierce energy. We devote ourselves to thee in thought, word and deed. Be gracious unto us.' Gratified with these adorations, the holy one, saluting them with the word 'Welcome' said unto them, 'Let your fears be dispelled. Say, what we are to do for you?'"'"

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"'Duryodhana said, "After the fears of those throngs of the pitris, the gods, and the Rishis had thus been dispelled by that high-souled Deity, Brahman then offered his adorations, unto Sankara, and said these words for the benefit of the universe, 'Through thy favour, O Lord of all, the Lordship of all creatures is mine. Occupying that rank, I have given a great boon to the Danavas. It behoveth none else, save thee, O Lord of the Past and the Future, to destroy those wicked wights that show no regard for any one. Thou O god, art the only person competent to slay the foes of these denizens of heaven that have sought thy protection and that solicit thee. O lord of all the gods, show favour to these.

Slay the Danavas, O wielder of the trident. O giver of honours, let the universe, through thy grace, obtain happiness. O Lord of all the worlds, thou art the one whose shelter should be sought. We all seek thy shelter.'

"'"Sthanu said, 'All your foes should be slain. But, I shall not however, slay them single-handed. The enemies of the gods are possessed of might. Therefore, all of you, united together, consume those enemies of yours in battle, with half my might. Union is great strength.'

"'"The gods said, 'Theirs (Danavas') is twice the energy and might of ourselves, we think, for we have already seen their energy and might.'

"'"The holy one said, 'Those sinful wights that have offended against ye should be slain. With half of my energy and might, slay all those enemies of yours.'

"'"The gods said, 'We will not be able, O Maheswara, to bear half of thy energy. With, on the other hand, half of our united might, do thou slay those foes.'

"'"The holy one said, 'If, indeed, ye have not the ability to bear half of my might, then, endued with half of your united energy, I will slay them.'

"'Duryodhana continued, "The celestials then, addressing the god of gods, said 'So be it' O best of kings. Taking half of their energies from all of them, he became superior in might. Indeed, in might that god became superior to all in the universe. From that time Sankara came to be called Mahadeva. And Mahadeva then said, 'Armed with bow and shaft, I will, from my car, slay in battle those foes of yours, ye denizens of heaven. Therefore, ye gods, see now to my car and bow and shaft so that I may, this very day, throw the Asuras down on the Earth.'

"'"The gods said, 'Gathering all forms that may be found in the three worlds and taking portions of each, we will each, O Lord of the gods, construct a car of great energy for thee. It will be a large car, the handiwork of Viswakarman, designed with intelligence.' Saying this, those tigers among the gods began the construction of that car. And they made Vishnu and Soma and Hutasana the arrow for Sankara's use. Agni became the staff, and Soma became the head, and Vishnu the point, O king, of that foremost of arrows. The goddess Earth, with her large cities and towns, her mountains and forests and islands, that home of diverse creatures, was made the car. The Mandara mountain was made its axle; and the great river Ganga was made its Jangha; and the points of the compass, cardinal and subsidiary became the ornaments of the car. The constellations became its shaft; the Krita age became its yoke; and that best of Snakes, viz., Vasuki, became the Kuvara of that car. Himavat and Vindhya mountains became its Apaskara and Adhishthana; and the Udaya and the Asta mountains were made the wheels of that car by those foremost ones among the gods. They made the excellent Ocean, that abode of the Danavas its other axle. The seven Rishis became the protectors of the wheels of that car. Ganga and Sarasvati and Sindhu and the Sky became its Dhura; all the other rivers and all the waters became the chords for binding the several limbs of that car.

Day and Night and the other divisions of time such as Kalas and Kasthas, and the Seasons became its Amukarsha. The blazing planets and the stars became its wooden fence; Religion, Profit, and Pleasure, united together, became its Trivenu. The herbs and the creepers, decked with flowers and fruits, became its bells. Making the Sun and the Moon equal, these were made the (other two) wheels of that foremost of cars. Day and Night were made its auspicious wings on the right and left. The ten foremost of snakes having Dhritarashtra for their first, all exceedingly strong, formed the (other) shaft of that car. The Sky was made its (other) yoke, and the clouds called Samvartaka and Valahaka were the leathern strings of the yoke. The two Twilights and Dhritri and Medha and Sthiti and Sannati, and the firmament bespangled with planets and stars, were made the skins for covering that car. Those Regents of the world, viz., the Lords of the gods, of the waters, of the dead, and of treasures, were made the steeds of that car. Kalaprishtha, and Nahusha, and Karkotaka, and Dhananjaya and the other snakes became the chords for binding the manes of the steeds. The cardinal and the subsidiary directions became the reins of the steeds of that car. The Vedic sound Vashat became the goad, and Gayatri became the string attached to that goad. The four auspicious days were made the traces of the steeds, and the pitris presiding over them were made the hooks and pins. Action and truth and ascetic penances and profit were made the chords of that car. The Mind became the ground upon which that car stood, and Speech the tracks upon which it was to proceed. Beautiful banners of various hues waved in the air. With lightning and Indra's bow attached to it, that blazing car gave fierce light. That space of time which, on a former occasion, had, in the Sacrifice of the high-souled Ishana, been fixed as a Year, became the bow, and the goddess Savitri became the loud-sounding bow-string. A celestial coat of mail was made, decked with costly gems, and impenetrable and effulgent, sprung from the wheel of Time. That golden mountain, viz., the beautiful Meru, became the flagstaff, and the clouds decked with flashes of lightning became its banners. Thus equipped, that car shone brilliantly like a blazing fire in the midst of the priests officiating at a sacrifice. Beholding that car properly equipped, the gods became filled with wonder. Seeing the energies of the entire universe united together in one place, O sire, the gods wondered, and at last represented unto that illustrious Deity that the car was ready. After, O monarch, that best of cars had thus been constructed by the gods, O tiger among men, for grinding their foes, Sankara placed upon it his own celestial weapons. Making the sky its flagstaff, he placed upon it his bovine bull. The Brahmana's rod, the rod of Death, Rudra's rod, and Fever became the protectors of the sides of that car and stood with faces turned towards all sides. Atharvan and Angirasa became the protectors of the car-wheels of that illustrious warrior. The Rigveda, the Samaveda, and the Puranas stood in advance of that car. The histories and the Yajurveda became the protectors of the rear. All sacred Speeches and all the Sciences stood around it, and all hymns, O monarch, and the Vedic sound of Vashat also. And the syllable Om, O king, standing in the van of that car, made it exceedingly beautiful. Having made the Year adorned with the six seasons his bow, he made his own shadow the irrefragable string of that bow

in that battle. The illustrious Rudra is Death's self. The Year became his bow; Kala Ratri the Death-night therefore, which is Rudra's shadow, became the indestructible string of that bow. Vishnu and Agni and Soma became (as already said) the arrow. The universe is said to consist of Agni and Soma. The universe is similarly said to consist of Vishnu. Vishnu is, again, the Soul of the holy Bhava of immeasurable energy. For this the touch of that bow-string became unbearable to the Asuras. And the lord Sankara cast on that arrow his own irresistible and fierce wrath, the unbearable fire of anger, viz., that which was born of wrath of Bhrigu and Angirasa. Then He called Nila Rohita (Blue and Red or smoke)--that terrible deity robed in skins,--looking like 10,000 Suns, and shrouded by the fire of superabundant Energy, blazed up with splendour. That discomfiter of even him that is difficult of being discomfited, that victor, that slayer of all haters of Brahma, called also Hara, that rescuer of the righteous and destroyer of the unrighteous, viz., the illustrious Sthanu, accompanied by many beings of terrible might and terrible forms that were endued with the speed of the mind and capable of agitating and crushing all foes, as if with all the fourteen faculties of the soul awake about him, looked exceedingly resplendent. Having his limbs for their refuge, this entire universe of mobile and immobile creatures that were present there, O king, looked beautiful, presenting a highly wonderful appearance. Beholding that car, duly equipped, he cased himself in mail and armed himself with the bow, and took up that celestial shaft born of Soma and Vishnu and Agni. The gods, O king, then commanded that foremost of celestials, viz., Wind, to breathe after that puissant Deity all the fragrance that he carries. Then Mahadeva, terrifying the very gods, and making the very Earth tremble, ascended that car resolutely. Then the great Rishis, the Gandharvas, those throngs of gods and those diverse tribes of Apsaras began to praise that Lord of the gods while he was about to ascend that car. Adored by the regenerate Rishis, and praised by the eulogists and diverse tribes of dancing Apsaras well-versed in the art of dancing, that boon-giving lord, armed with scimitar and arrow and bow, looked very beautiful. Smiling, he then asked the gods, 'Who will become my driver?' The gods answered him, saying, 'He whom thou wilt appoint, will, O Lord of the gods, without doubt, become thy driver!' Unto them the god replied, 'Reflecting yourselves, without delay make him my driver who is superior to me!' Hearing these words uttered by that high-souled Deity, the gods repaired unto the Grandsire and inclining him to grace, said these words, 'We have accomplished everything, O holy one, that thou hadst ordered us to do in the matter of afflicting the foes of celestials. The Deity having the bull for his mark has been gratified with us. A car hath been constructed by us, equipped with many wonderful weapons. We do not, however, know who is to become the driver of that foremost of cars. Therefore, let some foremost one among the gods be appointed as the driver. O holy one, it behoveth thee to make true those words that thou, O lord, hadst then said to us. Before this, O god, thou hadst even said to us that thou wouldst do us good. It behoveth thee to accomplish that promise. That irresistible and best of cars, that router of our foes, hath been constructed out of the component parts of the celestials. The Deity armed with Pinaka hath been made the warrior who

is to stand on it. Striking the Danavas with fear, he is prepared for battle. The four Vedas have become the four foremost of steeds. With her mountains, the Earth has become the car of that high-souled one. The stars have become the adornments of that vehicle. (As already said) Hara is the warrior. We do not, however, see who is to become the driver. A driver should be sought for that car who is superior to all these. Equal to thee in importance is that car, O god, and Hara is the warrior. Armour, and weapons, and bow, these we have got already, O Grandsire. Except thee, we do not behold any person that can make its driver. Thou art endued with every accomplishment. Thou, O lord, art superior to all the gods. Mounting upon that car with speed, hold the reins of those foremost of steeds, for the victory of the celestials and the destruction of their foes.' It has been heard by us that bowing with their heads unto the Grandsire that Lord of the three worlds, the gods sought to gratify him for inducing him to accept the drivership.

"'"The Grandsire said, 'There is nothing of untruth in all this that ye have said, ye denizens of heaven. I will hold the reins of the steeds for Kapaddin while he will be engaged in fight.' Then that illustrious god, that Creator of the worlds, the Grandsire, was appointed by the gods as the driver of the high-souled Ishana. And when he was about to ascend quickly upon that car worshipped by all, those steeds, endued with the speed of the wind, bowed themselves with their heads to the Earth. Having ascended the car the illustrious Deity, viz., the Grandsire resplendent with his own energy, took the reins and the goad. Then the illustrious god, raising those steeds addressed that foremost one among the gods, viz., Sthanu, saying, 'Ascend.' Then, taking that arrow composed of Vishnu and Soma and Agni, Sthanu ascended the car, causing the foe to tremble by means of his bow. The great Rishis, the Gandharvas, the throngs of gods, and the diverse tribes of Apsaras, then praised that Lord of the gods after he had ascended the car. Resplendent with beauty, the boon-giving Lord, armed with scimitar, shaft, and bow, stayed on the car causing the three worlds to blaze forth with his own energy. The great Deity once more said unto the gods headed by Indra, 'Ye should never grieve, doubting my ability to destroy the Asura. Know that the Asuras have already been slain by means of this arrow'. The gods then answered, saying, 'It is true! The Asuras have already been slain.' Indeed, the gods thinking that the words which the divine Lord had said could not be untrue, became exceedingly gratified. Then that Lord of the gods proceeded surrounded by all the gods, upon that large car, O king, which had nothing to compare with it. And the illustrious Deity was adored, all the while by the attendants that always wait upon him, and by others that subsisted on meat, that were invincible in battle, and that danced in joy on the present occasion, running wildly on all sides and shouting at one another, Rishis also, of great good fortune, possessed of ascetic merit and endued with high qualities, as also the gods, wished for Mahadeva's success. When that boon-giving Lord, that dispeller of the fears of the three worlds, thus proceeded, the entire universe, all the gods, O best of men, became exceedingly gratified. And the Rishis there adored the Lord of the gods with diverse hymns, and enhancing his energy, O

king, took up their station there. And millions upon millions of Gandharvas played upon diverse kinds of musical instruments at the hour of his setting out. When the boon-giving Brahman, having ascended the car, set out for the Asuras, the Lord of the Universe, smiling the while, said, 'Excellent, Excellent! Proceed, O god, to the spot where the Daityas are. Urge the steeds wakefully. Behold today the might of arms while I slay the foe in battle.' Thus addressed, Brahman urged those steeds endued with the fleetness of the wind or thought towards that spot where the triple city, O king, stood, protected by the Daityas and the Danavas. With those steeds worshipped by all the worlds, and which coursed with such speed that they seemed to devour the skies, the illustrious god quickly proceeded for the victory of the denizens of heaven. Indeed, when Bhava, riding on the car, set out towards the triple city, his bull uttered tremendous roars, filling all the points of the compass. Hearing that loud and terrible roar of the bull, many of the descendants and followers of Taraka, those enemies of the gods, breathed their last. Others amongst them stood facing the foe for battle. Then Sthanu, O king, armed with trident became deprived of his senses in wrath. All creatures became frightened, and the three worlds began to tremble. Frightful portents appeared when he was on the point of aiming that shaft. In consequence, however, of the pressure caused by the weight of Soma, Agni, and Vishnu that were in that shaft, as also of the pressure caused by the weight of Brahman and Rudra and the latter's bow, that car seemed to sink. Then Narayana, issuing out of the point of that shaft, assumed the form of a bull and raised that large car. During the time the car had sunk and the foe had began to roar, the illustrious Deity, endued with great might began, from rage, to utter loud shouts, standing, O giver of honours, on the head of his bull and the back of his steeds. At that time the illustrious Rudra was employed in eyeing the Danava city. While in that posture, O best of men, Rudra cut off the teats of the horses and clove the hoofs of the bull. Blessed be thou, from the date the hoofs of all animals of the bovine species came to be cloven. And from that time, O king, horses, afflicted by the mighty Rudra of wonderful deeds, came to be without teats. Then Sarva, having stringed his bow and aimed that shaft with which he had united the Pasupata weapon, waited thinking of the triple city. And O king, as Rudra thus stood, holding his bow, the three cities during that time became united. When the three cities, losing their separate characters became united, tumultuous became the joy of the high-souled gods. Then all the gods, the Siddhas, and the great Rishis, uttered the word Jaya, adoring Maheshwara. The triple city then appeared immediately before that god of unbearable energy, that Deity of fierce and indescribable form, that warrior who was desirous of slaying the Asuras. The illustrious deity, that Lord of the universe, then drawing that celestial bow, sped that shaft which represented the might of the whole universe, at the triple city. Upon that foremost of shafts, O thou of great good fortune, being shot, loud wails of woe were heard from those cities as they began to fall down towards the Earth. Burning those Asuras, he threw them down into the Western ocean. Thus was the triple city burnt and thus were the Danavas exterminated by Maheswara in wrath, from desire of doing good to the three worlds. The fire born of his own wrath, the three-

eyed god quenched, saying, 'Do not reduce the three worlds to ashes.' After this, the gods, the Rishis, and the three worlds became all restored to their natural dispositions, and gratified Sthanu of unrivalled energy with words of high import. Receiving then the permission of the great god, the gods with the Creator at their head went away to the places they came from, their object being accomplished after such effort. Thus that illustrious Deity, that Creator of the worlds, that Lord of both the Gods and the Asuras, viz., Maheswara, did that which was for the good of all the worlds. As the illustrious Brahman, the Creator of the worlds, the Grandsire, the Supreme Deity of unfading glory, acted as the driver of Rudra, so do thou restrain the steeds of the high-souled son of Radha like Grandsire restraining those of Rudra. There is not the slightest doubt, O tiger among kings, that thou art superior to Krishna, to Karna, and to Phalguna. In battle, Karna is like Rudra, and thou art like Brahman in policy. United, ye two, therefore, are competent to vanquish my foes that are even like the Asuras. Let, O Shalya, that be done speedily today by which this Karna, grinding the Pandava troops, may be able to slay Kunti's son owning white steeds and having Krishna for the driver of his car. Upon thee depend Karna, ourselves, our kingdom, and (our) victory in battle. Hold the reins, therefore, of the excellent steeds (of Karna).